In addition to meeting with physical and emotional needs, the child must be protected from the nurtured by the numerous supernatural forces in the form of malevolent and benevolent spirits which operate to influence the course of an individual's life. There are lucky and unlucky days, years, and tides, which are believed to determine the fate of a person. Females born in the year of the monkey are considered unlucky, for they are thought to outlive their male contemporaries. Men dislike marrying them. Supplications are made and precautionary measures taken by adults to secure the newborn's life, happiness, and health.

Ancestral spirits influence the development and fate of the child. Occasionally a child who is the victim of ill health during his early years is adopted by a couple whose ancestral spirits are thought to be more favorable than his own on the dictate of the fortune teller. By mysterious calculations involving birth dates of the principals, the fortune teller uncovers some incompatibility and advises adoption. The child remains with his parents but worships the ancestral spirits of his adoptive parents. In this way parents seek to ensure the well-being of the child.

Mother interview data indicate the awareness of Taira people of the variations in personality among children of one family. Adults do in a large measure adapt their actions in accord with these differences. They recognize hereditary influences, but although a mother may comment on the similarity of temperament with regard to her child and other members in the family or kin group, there are no ideas or beliefs that the souls of deceased are inherited. Usually the mother, in describing the characteristics of the child, rarely goes beyond likenesses which can be attributed to herself or her husband. She is at a loss to explain the "very different child." "My eldest son has my nasty temper whereas my second daughter is not like either of us, very strange. All the others have a little of myself and my husband in them. We often wonder how it is that she is so unlike either of us."

A child born with two cowlicks predicates a "problem" to his parents. Parents often explain, "Oh, this child is very naughty, for as you can see, he has two cowlicks." Children often search each other's heads, and on discovering two instead of the single whorl, they shout in glee, "Naughty, naughty." One 4-year-old cuddled and hugged his newborn sister after searching her head. "You have two cowlicks just like me! You and I are 'naughty,'" he whispered to her. Turning to the adults in the room, he snapped his small bright eyes and grinned impishly as he reported his discovery joyfully.

Twin births are disliked only because they place a burden on the

769 of the child; the child prays several times a year, on the important occa-
753 sions, at the ancestral tablets of the adopted parent, but otherwise lives as before. The rationale of this practice may be: if one set of ancestors is not sufficient for the child, why not give him another?

753 Also related to the concept ugvambusuku is the notion that certain
828 persons are destined to do more than just make offerings; some are to become
794 kaminchu, "god persons", and play the principal roles at the family worship at the important holidays. If these persons shirk this duty they may become ill as a consequence. In certain persons, particularly older women, persistent illness and especially mental illness may be interpreted as a sure sign that the afflicted person ought to become a kaminchu. There is one well-recognized type of mental illness called 'kami-buri'; the person with this disorder constantly makes the gestures of prayer toward various persons and objects in an extravagant manner. Such a person is almost sure to become a religious practitioner after recovery. In fact some kaminchu positions must
[756] be filled by persons who have had 'kami-buri'. The yuta may also receive his, or more often her, vocation through such an illness. (Recently a visiting psychiatrist commented on the low number of cases at the Kin mental hospital. There are of course many cases that are not committed to the institution because Okinawan society has a place for them; they become its psychiatrists.)

Other concepts of disease will be discussed in the next section.

4. Medical Practice

755 Home Remedies There are a number of home remedies that are known to many
757 persons, especially older women. These include the use of certain herbs, the letting of blood, the use of salt, prayer, swearing for exorcism, spells. These methods of treatment may be used by any old woman to the extent of her knowledge, but if the illness appears to be too serious for these treatments a professional medical practitioner may be consulted. However, the distinction between the professional person and the skilled amateur is not always clear.

757 Herbs are used for digestive disorders and particularly for female
824 disorders. Tawada in his description of Okinawan flora[1] lists ten plants used for medicinal purposes, nine of which are said to be useful to female disorders along with a variety of other things ranging from toothaches to appendicitis.

757 Blood-letting is practiced on most infants as a cure for skin eruptions and is sometimes also used on adults. Shallow incisions are made with a razor to let out the "bad blood". These are made on a baby's buttocks and sometimes, though less frequently at the present time than in the past, on the face of an adult.

755 Salt is used for purification. A yuta whom I saw exorcise a house and yard took salt into his mouth and then spit it and threw it in the

1 Tawada, 1951.